

Migration in the Era of Retrenchment:  
How Rising Ethnic Diversity Shapes Attitudes toward the Welfare State

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## Introduction

The welfare state has long been sustained by public opinion; hence, fluctuation in public support for the welfare state is not a new phenomenon. Over the last century, its growth and decline in various countries is evidence of how the welfare regime responds to factors affecting societal attitudes. Industrial European countries have held the welfare state to be a pillar of society with committed beneficiaries for decades, making it relatively impervious to pressure (Pierson 1994). Specifically in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, the high levels of institutionalization for welfare systems have generated a durability that relies heavily on the support for redistribution (Esping-Andersen 1990). Yet, recently the influence of retrenchment advocates has increased so that even policymakers on the left have begun contemplating possible private sector alternatives (Neville 2013; Dam 2014; Vangkilde 2014). While in the past, policymakers with even the slightest inclination towards neoliberal reforms and cuts have met with negative responses (Kuhnle & Eitheim 1999, Svallfors 1999), the boldness would imply a decreased fear of repercussions from the population and its staunch support for the welfare state. Scholars attribute support for the welfare state to both situational and ideological factors (Blekesaune 2007; Hasenfeld and Rafferty 1989).

Studies surrounding public opinion, particularly in Scandinavia, have noted changing perceptions reflected in support for the welfare state, including resistance to continued expansion (Bergmark et al. 2000). Scholars found that falling support for policies occurred when programs no longer lived up to prior expectations (Kumlin 2002; Svallfors 2002). In contrast, recent findings put forth by Svallfors (2011) concerning Swedish opinions show the opposite, that attitudes have remained largely stable, despite wide-ranging marketization of the welfare state over the last two decades. But if support for government involvement in welfare policies is not changing, how are governments

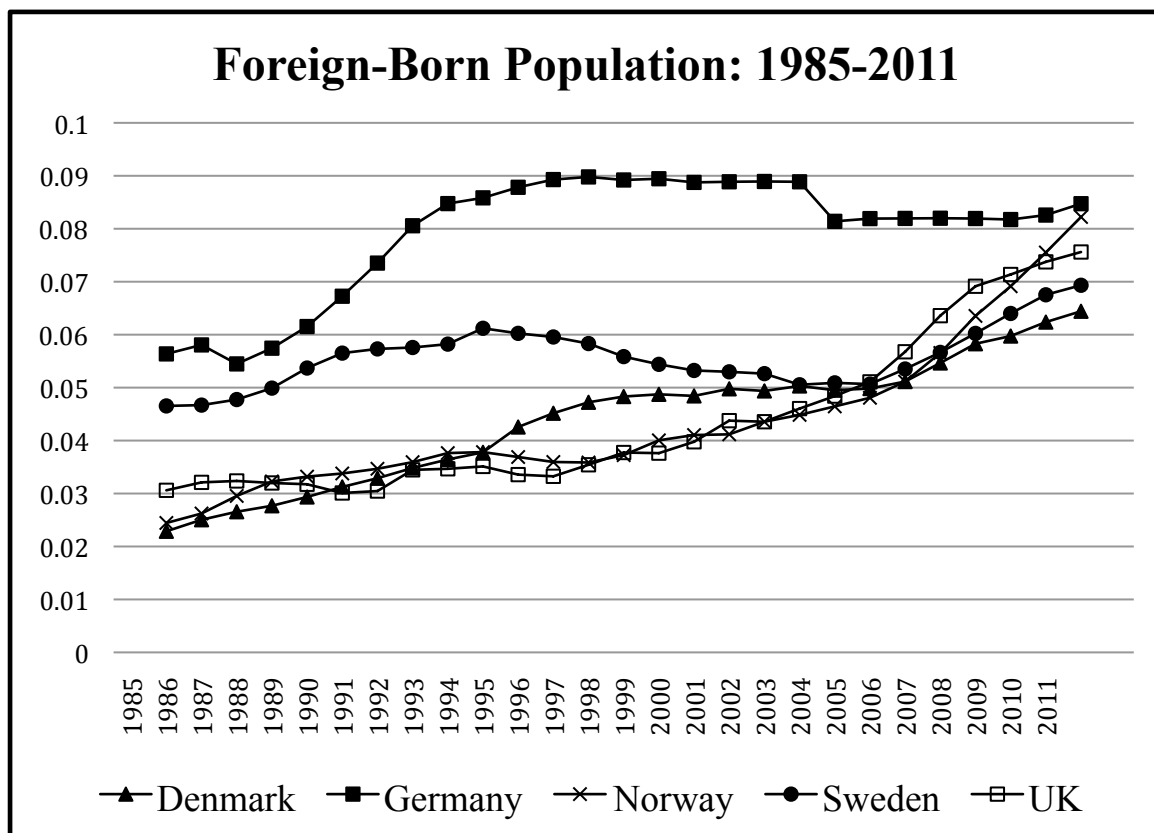
and policymakers able to consider and institute policies aimed at privatization? Foundational research has shown that citizens will be primed to punish politicians who try to retrench social insurance (Pierson 1994; 1996), but instead, permissive attitudes are observed in countries where they are least expected. Because attitudes toward welfare are such a crucial factor in welfare state reform, understanding how these attitudes are shaped is critically important to the overall study of welfare in Europe and beyond.

One key factor that the literature often overlooks is the effect of ethnic diversity and racial differences that can inevitably cause rifts in the social order (Gilens 1995; 1996; Oberg et al. 2011). Though a number of scholars will mention the divisive nature of these differences in passing, it is only in more recent years that racial and ethnic differences are considered to be serious factors and this most often is mentioned in a comparative context with the United States (Gilens 1999; Alesina et al. 2001).

The purpose of this research is to discern whether or not a causal relationship exists between the changes in homogeneity within a society and public support for the welfare state. Observable trends in immigration and public opinion among industrialized European nations would suggest the plausibility of such a relationship. While it has already been noted that policymakers have demonstrated an increased interest in privatization of portions of the welfare regime, another indicator of the effects of ethnic diversity on the attitudes of a population is the rise in popularity of far-right, populist nationalist parties in a number of countries including the Netherlands, Italy, France, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark to varying levels of extreme (Van der Brug & Fennema 2008). Characterized by anti-immigrant, Islamophobic and even anti-EU policies, these movements have seen expanded influence

in recent years that sometimes result in extremist behavior such as the violent massacre of 69 people in Norway in 2011. While there are a number of potential explanations for the recent trend, the xenophobic rhetoric utilized by many party leaders would suggest a strong and hostile reaction to ethnic diversity that is likely to have ripple effects on policies other than immigration (i.e. welfare policy). At the same time, the level of immigration in many industrial European nations is growing (see fig. 1), which naturally increases the amount of visibility of immigrants and the amount of interactions between the native and immigrant populations. Current research on welfare reform and research focusing on the rise of far-right parties have remained relatively separate. The purpose here is to examine whether there is a connection: does the rise in immigration and the attendant increase in support for anti-immigrant parties help to explain changes in support for the welfare state?

**Figure 1**



Theoretical motivations for the research concern the critical dynamic between in-groups and out-groups. The influence of racial prejudice has long been a powerful motivator to explain a lack of solidarity and trust in more diverse or fragmented societies, where extensive literature documents individuals' tendencies to favor members of their own group (Habyarimana et al. 2007). Because ethnic and racial differences are very strong forms of group identification, it is likely that ethnic heterogeneity acts as an obstacle to solidarity (Alesina et al. 2001). While the previous claims are framed around the welfare policies in the United States, juxtaposing these observations with the higher levels of homogeneity in industrial, Northern European countries provides an interesting background for such theories. The formation of many European welfare states occurred in a context where smaller countries comprised of highly homogenous populations. Thus it is reasonable to examine the impact of recent increases in heterogeneity of the population arising from non-Western immigration on support for retrenchment in Northern Europe.

## **Review of Literature**

The first step in studying the public's attitudes for welfare is to properly identify and define the subject. Though there is a clear "core" associated with welfare among scholars, the boundaries are often less easily agreed upon. For this study's purposes, Esping-Andersen's definition serves as a powerful foundation:

Above all, it must involve the granting of social rights. If social rights are given the legal and practical status of property rights, if they are inviolable, and if they are granted on the basis of citizenship rather than performance, they will entail a de-commodification of the status of individuals *vis-à-vis* the market (1990: 21).

The focus on de-commodification of individuals—the guaranteed survival of workers that is not contingent upon the scale of their labor—is the driving factor of his definition, which he notes is a recent development in contemporary welfare states. Minimally, these states must entail that “citizens can freely, and without potential loss of job, income, or general welfare, opt out of work when they themselves consider it necessary” (1990: 23). For Esping-Andersen, the concept of de-commodification is used to compare and classify welfare regimes into three different categories: liberal, corporatist, and social democratic. Esping-Anderson develops a system of categorizing the different welfare states by their structure and ultimately, their ability to develop systems of stratification and solidarity within each regime. The essence of the welfare state, and what separates different regimes into different typologies, is their focus on the redistribution or pooling of risk. He notes that the Scandinavian welfare states, which are the focus of this study, tend to be the most universal and egalitarian.

Understanding and interpreting ethnic diversity is a complicated undertaking, to say the least. Traditional means of measuring and conceptualizing ethnic diversity is the index of ethnolinguistic fractionalization (ELF). The ELF, as described in a study by Alesina and colleagues (2003), considers population cleavages by language, religion, and ethnicity. However, as they note, the data from different countries is often difficult to interpret. For example, while the United States collects census data surrounding language, religion, and race, some European countries do not often report on the racial differences within their population, but instead focus solely on “ethnicity”, which largely reflects languages. These complications create a lack of uniformity in systems of measurement.

For the purposes of this study, immigration data serves as a better measure of diversity. Because Europe remained relatively ethnically homogenous for so long, especially Scandinavian countries, immigration data provides an accurate reflection of the increasing levels of diversity felt by members of society. Additionally, because much of the reactions to decreasing ethnic homogeneity are voiced in the form of anti-immigration rhetoric—mainly promulgated by newly-popular, far-right political parties—there is support for the concept of immigration and ethnic diversity in general as a relatively new phenomenon for many European countries. Thus immigration data would provide an accurate reflection of the shifting levels of ethnic diversity perceived and reflected in the attitudes of the public.

#### Explanations for Change in Support for Welfare State in Europe

Various factors are employed to explain change in support for the welfare state in Northern Europe ranging from demographic change (aging), globalization, deindustrialization, budget crises, or neoliberal ideals. Because public opinion and support for the welfare state tends to be reflected in the actual policy outcomes, the studies will not be limited to what affects public support for the welfare state, but also what affects the expansion or retrenchment of the welfare state. This assumption is especially powerful when considering welfare state retrenchment, which is much more reliant upon public support for its existence due to the strong existing support bases that must first shift (Pierson 1996). Additionally, because of the extensive number of studies dealing with welfare state change, the review of literature is more selective and focuses on the strands of thought concerning the driving influences on the welfare regime.

### Response to Changing Pressures

Support for the welfare state is often claimed to be responsive to changing pressures on the society where it exists. The first such pressure to be considered is the effect of demographic change, which is best understood in regards to aging or the shifting demographic burden. In much of Europe, the population is getting older; simultaneously there is a smaller replacement rate from generation to generation. Changing demographics mean that the ratio of working-aged population to aged population is shrinking over time so that fewer people are contributing to welfare programs as more people began to draw out of them. While opponents of the welfare state often portray this problem as a time bomb—certain to bring about its downfall—Huber and Stephens (2001) argue that the imminent crisis has varying effects depending on the country where it is located. They argue that the working-aged population is often an inaccurate number because it counts many adults that are not contributing taxes to the support of the welfare state including unemployed, disabled, early retirees, and those on social assistance, in labor market training, and in education, along with adults not in the labor force, mainly housewives. Thus, in their view, the dependency ratio is often misrepresented. In reality then, this means that the welfare state is and has been supported and sustained by a very small ratio of contributors to non-contributors throughout its existence. However, as Huber and Stephens point out, for many countries there is room for improvement as more women are able to enter the working population due to more female-friendly labor policies such as maternity leave. In this area, social democratic welfare states are in some of the strongest positions due to their favorable active to non-active ratios in the work force. From this argument it would seem that welfare retrenchment is not truly dependent upon changing demographics



since pressures to support the growing aging population are not strongly felt and many countries working populations have yet to reach their maximum capacity and still have room to grow. The resilience of welfare programs can also be attributed to the idea that once instituted, social policies develop support bases that make any cuts particularly difficult, which is especially true among the aged populations (Pierson 1996). Finally, because it is understood that everyone can expect to grow old—and thus draw on benefits—it is unlikely that an increasingly aging population would support the welfare state less over time (Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003).

Like the shifting demographic burden, the effect of globalization—which for Europe includes increasing European integration—is often experienced differently depending on the style of welfare regime. The three general typologies of welfare states (liberal, social democratic, and corporatist) would interpret the impacts of globalization to be more strongly felt in states with national policies toward maintaining full employment (Esping-Andersen 1991; Korpi 2003). The reliance on high employment rates in certain production regimes enables the sustainment of generous welfare regimes such as those in Northern Europe. These high production policies create largely export-dependent countries, which necessitate the ability to compete in international markets. Thus the theory is that as competitiveness increases, states framed around such a scheme will suffer significantly as individual economies unable to compete are overwhelmed in the global economy (Strange 1996; Stryker 1998). Specifically, this would increase the people dependent on welfare state transfers and decrease the amount of people paying taxes to support the welfare state, which causes severe fiscal stress where international economic competition and integration force governments to scale back expensive welfare programs (Huber & Stephens 2001). Huber and Stephens argue

that the increased internationalization decreases the policy options of governments and that “welfare state retrenchment [is] primarily driven by unemployment” (2001). The focus on mass unemployment is echoed in Korpi’s research, in which he largely discounts research based on expenditure data that tends to “blur the contours of retrenchment” (2003:18-19). Instead, both scholars agree that the role of globalization on the European welfare state is best demonstrated by focusing on employment levels, which affects each economy to a different extent dependent upon the government’s ability to react. This means that different welfare states will react differently to such pressures as globalization. Fortunately, for the Scandinavian welfare states, Huber and Stephens (2001) also claim that they are the best equipped to adapt to the new economic environment due to their higher investment in human capital. Multiple scholars also argue that globalization’s threat is least powerful against those more generous social democratic states due to their historical reliance on international openness and highly globalized economies (Swank 2002; Hall and Soskice 2001; Brady et al. 2005). This argument in combination with the Northern European countries’ consistently high levels of growth would seem to show that the welfare regimes are not as vulnerable to the global economy as predicted. Studies by Paul Pierson, moreover, largely dismiss globalization as a source for fundamental change, citing the widespread popular support for welfare policies and the path dependence that it creates (1994; 1996). These concepts support the notion that once again, instead of retrenchment, globalization would increase support for the welfare state since the population would be much more reliant on social policies during times of unemployment, such as increasing global competition. Pierson’s work is also supported by a number of other studies, which largely agree on

the remarkable extent to which the European welfare states have proven resistant to change and retrenchment (Korpi 2003).

In contrast with the argument that globalization acts as a primary influence for change in support for the welfare state, Iversen and Cusack argue that instead of globalization, deindustrialization is the main source of change (2000). By studying the responses of different states to the impact of globalization, Iversen and Cusack conclude that it is the domestic, not international forces that affect the welfare state. Relying on the same typology as before, the study begins by separating the industrialized welfare states into three different categories organized by how they chose to respond to the high amounts of unemployment that erupted after globalization set in. However, instead of contributing the changes faced by industrialized economies to globalization, Iversen and Cusack claim, “increasing productivity, changing consumption patterns, and saturated demand for products from the traditional sectors of the economy are the main forces of change” (2000: 313). These “structural sources” of risk ultimately led governments to dramatically alter the existing employment structures in three fundamental ways. It is due to these different internal responses to the perceived shifts that Iversen and Cusack adhere to the idea that changes to the welfare state are a function of deindustrialization, not globalization.

Naturally, no one theory can account fully for change in attitudes toward the welfare state. However, considering the different pressures, it would seem that aging is more a source of media attention than actual changes. The universality of such risks ensures continuing support from the public. Furthermore, the effects of globalization, while placing pressure on the welfare state, would most likely influence the population’s support for welfare policies in a positive way. Increasing needs to be competitive in

global markets would generate less employment for unskilled workers in developed economies, which results in heavier reliance on welfare as people attempt to adapt in a post-industrial world. Yet, even as scholars argue that these pressures will ultimately force developed economies to reform, there is a general agreement that social democratic welfare regimes are in the best position to address such changes. Thus, neither pressure effectively generates the social support for retrenchment of welfare policies.

The third pressure suggested in Iversen and Cusack's study, proposes a very strong case that it is the individual countries' internal reactions, mainly in the form of deindustrialization, that are the true source of pressure affecting support for the welfare state (2000). However, while they focus on technological advance and shifting demand patterns that inevitably creates unemployment for those with less transferable skills, they leave future discussion open-ended. This is where the argument for the effects of ethnic diversity can serve to enrich the conversation. Swank and Betz argue that the loss of unskilled labor has led to a growth in support for far-right parties who see globalization and deindustrialization policies as the source of their problem (2002). Moreover, as more ethnically diverse populations flow into Europe—the majority of them low-skilled—their presence in already shrinking labor sectors generates negative attitudes in native workers who face increasing competition for jobs and lower wages (Dancygier & Donnelly 2013).

### Economic and Financial Crises

According to Pierson's *New Politics of the Welfare State* (2001), the welfare state is facing a period of permanent austerity. After taking into account the changes in the global economy and dismissing the idea of a convergence towards neoliberal ideas, he

argues that the welfare state still faces intense pressures for austerity that are in conflict with its enduring popularity. These pressures include those discussed in this paper such as demographic shifts, globalization, and deregulation. However, in agreement with other literature, he agrees that there is a need to recognize the three quite distinct configurations of welfare states among the affluent democracies. Pierson's analysis surrounding the varying effects of permanent austerity on the different welfare regimes described social democratic countries in the following manner:

In most respects...the social democratic countries have had less need to focus on issues of recalibration—certainly when compared to the conservative regime which I will discuss in a moment. In particular, there has been relatively little need for what I have termed updating—the adjustment of old welfare states to new needs and demands. ...The social democratic regime sustains very high rates of labour force participation for both men and women; it supports comparatively high fertility levels; it has extensive experience with active labour market policies designed to restrict exclusion and enhance skills; and it contains none of the clientelistic remnants that constitute such a costly problem on much of the European continent. (2001: 444)

Additionally, scholars have considered the effects of financial crises on attitudes toward the welfare state, including the most recent Great Recession of 2008. Margalit's analysis (2013) centers on the personal experiences of those who suffered under the most recent crisis and monitors how it shaped social policy preferences. What he finds is that while such experiences yield sizeable attitudinal shifts in the short run, overall the effect on preferences was transient in nature. Applying these findings to other affluent democracies would suggest that such economic shocks in general are likely to have little long run effects on public support for welfare policies.

Once again, the argument that distinct countries yield distinct reactions maintains resonance. Pierson claims that affluent welfare states are facing a new era of permanent austerity that is highly likely to shape attitudes toward future welfare policies. However, he maintains that the social democratic countries have weathered the shifts better than most countries through implementation of minimal reforms. While this information would seem to imply a relatively stable future for Scandinavian regimes, recent years demonstrate otherwise. Privatization policies have become increasingly common as citizens begin to grow skeptical of the institutions' ability to meet expectations (Bergmark et al. 2000; Kumlin 2002; Svallfors 2002;). In Sweden, the pension system has seen recent partial privatization (Svallfors 2011) as well as many of their health care services and the introduction of for-profit free schools (Ramesh 2012). Denmark's actions have garnered equal attention in recent years, including its push to overhaul entitlements (Daley 2013) and its dismantlement of the old education model (Witcombe 2013). The lack of backlash felt—or the lack of concern demonstrated in the face of protests—by policymakers responsible for implementing such supposedly unpopular policies would seem to contradict Pierson's suggestions.

### Neoliberal Ideals

The effect of shifting ideologies may be another potent factor for explaining changing support for the welfare state. Valuable research has been done surrounding the formation of ideologies, which dismisses “self-interest” as a force responsible for shaping welfare preferences (Gilens 1999; Margalit 2013). Specific studies suggest that “reciprocity”-based variables (including egalitarianism and basic needs generosity) are better predictors of support for redistribution than “self-interest”-based variables (including socioeconomic variables) (León 2012). This theory is especially strong when

considering situations of unemployment, for which support is more ideologically based. Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003) argue this is because while all people expect to be old and many face to the risk of being sick, which would simply support the argument for self-interest, not all people expect to be unemployed. Supporting welfare state policies for the unemployed, then, seems to be dependent upon ideology, which can vary between egalitarian and non-egalitarian tendencies. This variation is illustrated often by national differences in attitudes toward welfare state policies concerning the unemployed, which they claim reflect similar differences in egalitarian ideology. Furthermore, Blekesaune and Quadagno assert that in situations of high unemployment, public support for welfare policies is generally higher. According to their research, high unemployment “triggers changes in public attitudes toward the welfare state...[by making]...citizens of modern industrialized countries aware of the fact that they are vulnerable to risks beyond their control” (2003: 424).

In direct conflict with their ideas, Stryker (1998) instead suggests that higher unemployment levels—in this case brought about by globalization and deregulation—can create environments conducive to neoliberal ideologies. The “global diffusion of neoliberalism”, as he puts it, directly influences systemic welfare retrenchment (1999: 10). Jessop (2002) further claims that individualized interests are eroding the attention to collective problems. However, while these concepts seem alarming, welfare states are still able to respond flexibly (Taylor-Gooby 2005), and nations that are more historically egalitarian—for example, the Scandinavian welfare states—typically demonstrate more positive public attitudes toward welfare policies (Blekesaune & Quadagno 2003; Van Oorschot et al. 2012).

Scandinavian public opinion research shows that the public support for redistributive policies in generous welfare states will be, and so far has been largely unaffected by the spread of neoliberalism (Svallfors 1997; 2011). However, the argument does not necessarily hold up to empirical observations. As previously mentioned, recent policy trends toward more neoliberal practices—such as the privatization of welfare policies—that have been widely accepted by the general population, would clearly indicate a puzzling shift in attitudes. In an effort to explain such a divergence from the expected trend, it is useful to look towards literature surrounding ethnic diversity, which until the last few decades, was a relatively foreign concept for a majority of the Nordic populace.

Scholars rarely take into account is that the variables associated with reciprocity, including egalitarian views, are strongly dependent upon societal homogeneity. While some mention in passing that ethnic diversity often diminishes societal solidarity (Huber & Stephens 2001, León 2012), because many of the industrial European countries—especially Scandinavia—tend to have homogenous societies, it is rarely given lengthy consideration. Yet, because the perception of deservingness is often dependent upon criteria such as identity, increasing support for reciprocity exists when the individuals receiving benefits are perceived as more similar (Van Oorschot 2006). The mirror image of this argument is that societies that are more ethnically divided are less likely to perceive others as deserving, which would suggest that support for redistribution should then decrease as people have less faith in their fellow citizens.

### The United States: A Comparative Look

Where scholarship addressing ethnic diversity and public support for the welfare state is wanting in regard to Europe, American literature concerning the relationship is



remarkably well developed. Numerous studies have analyzed the support for welfare and redistribution in American society and sought to explain it testing both situational (i.e., unemployment, economic downturn) and ideological factors (Blekesaune & Quadagno 2002; Cook & Barrett 1992; Feldman 1988; Hasenfeld & Rafferty 1989). However, while these factors do have significance, it has also been proven that attitudes shaped around racial and ethnic heterogeneity strongly influence the pattern of support for welfare policies (Gilens 1995). Such racial and ethnic cleavages have been found to serve as a barrier to redistribution, not just in the United States, but also throughout the world (Alesina et al. 2001; Dancygier 2010). The concept has become more prominent in recent years due to the increasing attention paid by scholars. In Gilens' book, *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (1999), he explores the relationship between race and welfare policies on the American stage by drawing a connection between Americans' perceptions of the "deserving poor" and racial stereotypes. While other scholars have also noticed the parallel phenomena of racial fragmentation and the persistent American feeling that "people on welfare are lazy" (Alesina et al. 2001), Gilens argues that these two developments are connected and infers from this that racial attitudes diminish support for welfare. Because neither individualism nor self-interest led Americans to reject welfare on principle, Gilens focused on two additional explanations for opposition to welfare, which centered on perceptions of welfare recipients. These approaches revealed first that "the American public is strongly suspicious of the true need of welfare recipients" and second, "that white Americans view blacks as lacking commitment to the work ethic" (Gilens 1999: 60). By shifting the focus from the public's views of welfare as a program to the public's views of the individual recipients, a racialized nature of the

discussion of American welfare begins to reveal itself in the form of “race-coded” language.

Where “the poor” once conjured up images of southern European or Irish immigrants, or of white dust-bowl farmers, urban blacks now dominate our perceptions of poverty. The most salient contemporary images of the poor—the homeless beggar, the welfare queen, the teenage ghetto gang member, the heroin addict shooting up in an abandoned building—are strongly associated with minorities in both the mass media and the public imagination. (1999: 67)

Public perceptions create a racialized connotation when referring to welfare recipients that encourages people to imagine those relying on such programs as an “other”. These racial cleavages form an in-group, out-group dynamic that enforces the public’s dislike for welfare policies. In tandem with this dynamic, Gilens illustrates that a belief exists that the percent of minorities (blacks) benefitting from welfare programs is far higher than in reality. Combined these perceptions negatively shape public attitudes and drive down the public support for welfare.

Ultimately, these findings offer insight into the current situation faced by European nations. As affluent welfare states begin to face decreasing ethnic homogeneity due to increasing levels of immigration, an eerily similar dialect emerges with phrases like “welfare tourists” gaining popularity with policymakers and the public (Economist 2014). Initially, European countries reacted by tightening immigration policies, however these policies met with limited success as they contradicted one of the European Union’s founding principles of the free movement of people (Fontanella-Khan 2013).

Simultaneously the amount of non-EU immigrants—specifically Middle Eastern and Northern African—is also increasing. Already, conflict has erupted in Scandinavian

countries such as Sweden, where riots led by dissatisfied immigrant youths have shaken the Swedish populace (Higgins 2013). The riots are said to be a result of the discrimination and frustration felt by immigrants, which they argue lurks under the surface of Swedish society. At the same time, the Swedish Democrats, the anti-immigrant party, are gaining in popularity, which suggests rising tensions between ethnic Swedes and immigrants. Such situations can generate a lack of trust between ethnic groups, which according to Posner and his colleagues, serves to diminish support for cooperation and ultimately impedes the provision of public goods (Habyarimana 2007).

## **Methodology**

The methodology to be employed in this study is two-pronged, involving a multi-method strategy utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. First, a quantitative analysis involving cross-national public opinion data from 15 advanced industrial democracies between 1996 and 2006. The second portion concerns research collected abroad that examined the qualitative factors that might explain the observed statistical observations. Causal process tracing through interviews with Danish citizens elicit a more profound understanding of the phenomena shaping individuals' preferences for redistribution, and the subsequent public opinion on welfare state reform. In this section, the two strategies will be discussed separately.

## **Data**

The data analyzed in this study come from the 1996 and 2006 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) Role of Government surveys, which is a cross-national collaboration covering topics important for social science research. The decade between

the two surveys allows for the capture of public opinion as it changes between 1996 and 2006—a significant time period due to the higher levels of immigration (as demonstrated in figure 1). From the 1996 survey, 11 countries were included in the analysis. These represent all countries included in the dataset for which answers were available in the Role of Government questionnaire on the relevant variables: the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. From the 2006 survey, 15 countries were selected: the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Additional Role of Government surveys do exist for earlier years (1985 and 1990), however these earlier surveys had very limited country coverage when it came to the amount of countries that were included.

The dependent variable analyzed within the ISSP Role of Government survey for both 1996 and 2006 asks focuses on the government's responsibility to reduce income differences. The strength of the variable was selected because it captures the explicit support for redistribution. The specific phrasing is as follows with the responses coded 1 to 4:

On the whole, do you think it should or should not be the government's responsibility to reduce income differences between the rich and poor?

- (1) Definitely should be
- (2) Probably should be
- (3) Probably should not be
- (4) Definitely should not be

The first independent variable is the level of foreign-born immigrants within the country. As previously mentioned, the lack of uniformity for systems measuring ethnolinguistic fractionalization (ELF) complicated using such indices as a measurement of ethnic homogeneity. For the purposes of this study, immigration data serves as a

stronger measure for rising levels of ethnic heterogeneity for two reasons. First, because Europe, especially Northern European countries, remained relatively ethnically homogenous for so long, the data collected from immigration provides an accurate reflection of the increasing levels of diversity perceived by members of society. Second, because a population's attitudes tend to be reflected in the opinions of their policymakers, the rise of far-right parties with strong anti-immigrant views conveys the idea that the native population considers immigrants, and thus ethnic diversity in general, to be a relatively new phenomenon. Immigration and population figures were collected from the OECD Database for International Migration Statistics. The database publishes data collected from individual member countries, however, because illegal immigrants are by definition not recorded, it is likely that the total amount of immigrants reported in the database are underrepresented. From the database, this study looks at the yearly stock of foreign-born population within each OECD member nation.

Additionally, the regressions controlled for the support for government spending on unemployment benefits. This controls for the generalized support for the state, which is often reflected in whether or not the government should assist during times of unemployment. The idea is that support for redistribution should be separated from support for the state as a whole. The specific wording of the question is listed below.

*Please show whether you would like to see more or less government spending in each area. Remember that if you say 'much more', it might require a tax increase to pay for it.*

More or less spending for: Unemployment benefits.

- (1) Spend much more
- (2) Spend more
- (3) Spend the same as now
- (4) Spend less
- (5) Spend much less

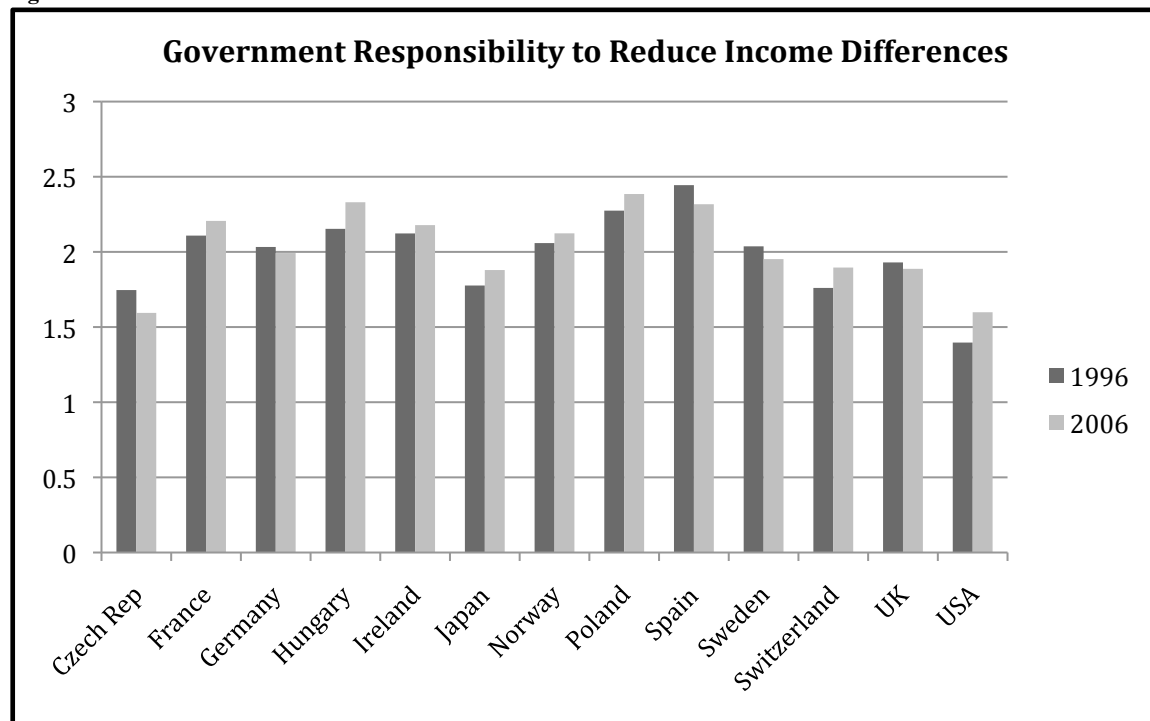
Other independent variables are included to control for demographic factors including the age (in years), education (years in school), current employment status (full-time employed = 1, part-time employed = 2, less than part-time = 3, helping family member = 4, unemployed = 5, student = 6, retired = 7, housewife = 8, permanently disabled = 9, other = 10), union membership (member = 1, not a member = 2), party affiliation left to right (far left = 1, left, center left = 2, center, liberal = 3, right, conservative = 4, far right = 5), and sex (male = 1, female = 0). Finally, to ensure accuracy, basic economic controls were gathered from the World Development Indicators (WDI) database. The three economic controls utilized in the regression were the size of the economy, measured in annual GDP (in current US\$), the level of wealth, measured as GDP per capita, the level of growth measured in annual percentage of GDP growth, and the annual budget balance as a percentage of GDP. These are all important controls to consider because they account for the various ways detailed in the review of literature for how rival hypotheses seek to explain high or low support for redistribution.

### Findings

The dependent variable in the study is the level public support of redistributive policies, while the independent variable was the level of immigration, specifically foreign-born immigrants within a country. Figure 2 illustrates the individual countries' responses to the ISSP Role of Government survey question across the two years 1996 and 2006. To make the image easier to understand, support for government responsibility to reduce income differences has been recoded so that a decrease in support is represented by a falling height on the bar graph. Already, there is no visible trend from the respondents. Because Finland and Denmark were not included in the

1996 survey, it is difficult to develop a complete picture of the Northern European countries' change in attitudes. Moreover, from the two Scandinavian countries that did take the survey, conflicting changes are revealed since Norway's support for redistribution increases, while Sweden's support decreases. However, both pictures were created without any controls put into place, and thus mandate further exploration.

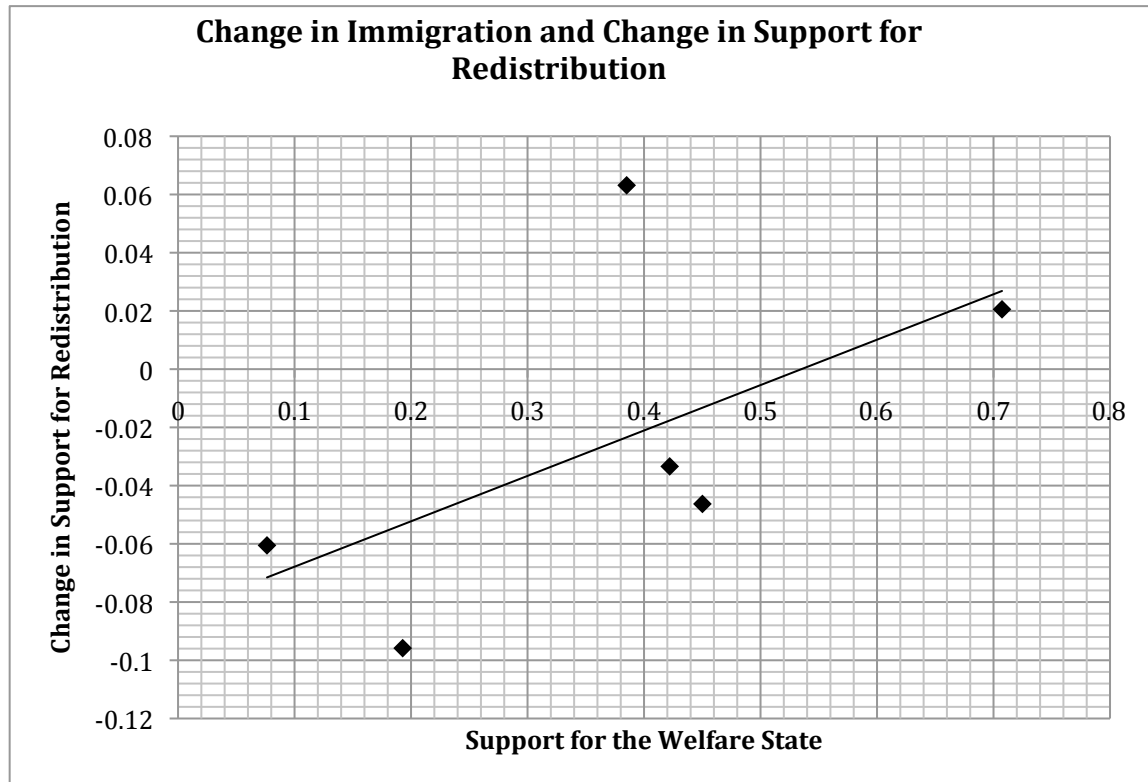
Figure 2



In order to observe general trends in support for redistribution within the context of immigration, Figure 3 compares changing levels of support for redistribution to changes in the foreign-born population. Here, however, note that higher scores on the redistribution question imply declining support for redistribution, the same system that is used to code the responses initially. This scatter plot in figure 3 illustrates the change in country-average responses for the question on government responsibility for reducing inequality (Y axis), and change in each country's percent foreign-born population (X axis). Already, there is a visible correlation between the two variables

demonstrating that as the amount of foreign-born population increases, support for redistribution decreases.

Figure 3



While this finding is by no means conclusive, and many controls need to be added before grand conclusions can be drawn, the existence of a correlation already suggests interesting results for the relationship between the level of immigration and the support for the welfare state.

Controlling for the multiple independent variables listed above, regressions were run to test for a causal relationship. The results are presented in table 1. Here is it important to remember that the coding of the dependent variable means that a higher number indicates lower support for redistribution.

The results of the statistical analysis suggest that on average, countries with a higher foreign-born population report a *lower* level of support for redistribution. There



**Table 1**

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 25		
Model	1.33666796	11	.121515269	F( 11, 13)	=	11.28
Residual	.140092219	13	.010776325	Prob > F	=	0.0001
				R-squared	=	0.9051
				Adj R-squared	=	0.8249
Total	1.47676018	24	.061531674	Root MSE	=	.10381

Redist Supp-Y	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Unempl Supp	.3755696	.087773	4.28	0.001	.1859475	.5651917
Foreign-born	1.389492	.731314	1.90	0.080	-.1904161	2.9694
Econ. Growth	.0401478	.0166872	2.41	0.032	.0040973	.0761983
Budget Bal	-.0045608	.0017566	-2.60	0.022	-.0083557	-.000766
Size of Econ	.0587431	.0095331	6.16	0.000	.0381481	.0793381
Age	.0256373	.0133593	1.92	0.077	-.0032237	.0544983
Education	-.0037272	.0071267	-0.52	0.610	-.0191235	.0116692
Employment	-.1775789	.1103449	-1.61	0.132	-.4159647	.0608068
Union Member	-.2648755	.0799388	-3.31	0.006	-.4375728	-.0921783
Party Affil	.0642634	.0286087	2.25	0.043	.0024582	.1260687
Sex	2.037496	.7199081	2.83	0.014	.4822295	3.592763
Cons	-2.529083	1.210291	-2.09	0.057	-5.143758	.0855927

is a low level of statistical significance ( $p < .1$ ) that a change in the percentage of foreign-born population affects preferences for redistribution. This was surprising considering the strong empirical and theoretical motivations behind the study. Though the statistical significance is low, it should not be dismissed altogether, especially considering the lower sample size ( $n = 25$ ). Unfortunately, the lower level of significance does not offer strong evidence that the percent of foreign-born population has an effect—especially considering the confidence interval, which has a range that includes zero.

The results ultimately point to a different conclusion; they suggest that while the absolute volume of immigrants may have an affect on the support for redistributive policies, the actual effect of immigrants is likely more nuanced in nature. This suggestion is further supported by qualitative data articulated in the second half of the study. Additionally, while these data yield a preliminary result, there is a level of uncertainty present concerning what the immigration data are actually measuring. A dominant factor that could ultimately affect the findings in the study is whether or not

the foreign-born population accurately captures true in-group, out-group dynamics. However, while not conclusive in nature, there is a reasonable suggestion that a negative relationship does exist between the percentage of foreign-born population and the support for redistribution.

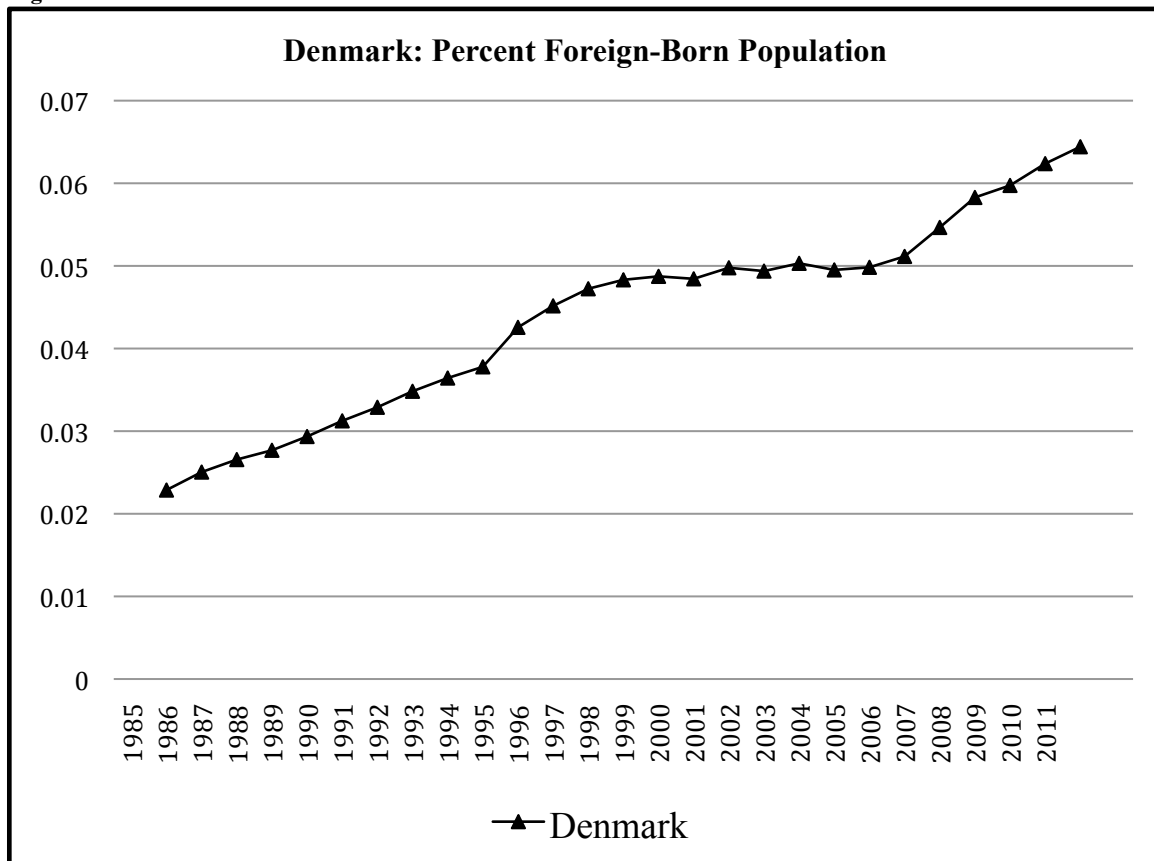
A major setback for the study was the limited amount of countries that initially participated in the ISSP Role of Government surveys. While the participation for 1996 and 2006 was sufficient, higher participation in the preliminary years would have provided a more complete regression over time. Furthermore, because even many developed countries did not keep stable records of immigration data over time, comparing changes in the overall level of ethnic diversity was another obstacle to a more complete study. Future research would absolutely benefit such a study as the situation unfolds and opinions towards immigration develop.

#### Immigration and Welfare Dynamics in Denmark

Denmark provides a valuable case study for the project due to its historically high levels of homogeneity through the latter portion of twentieth century, an increasing amount of foreign immigrants (see fig. 4), and recent trends toward diminishing support for the traditional welfare state. These features culminate in a sort of “natural experiment” for application of the theories suggested in the United States literature and offer a strong case for comparison. Interviews provide an opportunity for face-to-face interaction which allows for the observation of instantaneous responses rather than thought-out answers, the possibility of follow up questions, and additionally facilitates the development of a research design more conducive to the collection of unbiased results. A smaller, country-specific case study moreover enables a more intimate setting to enhance the collection of personal narratives in research. The field

research was conducted during the month of December 2013 and consisted of a convenience sample of 25 Danish citizens. Citizens were selected then interviewed in a variety of neutral locations such as cafes, libraries and various public places throughout Copenhagen.

**Figure 4**



### Findings

The qualitative data suggest interesting conclusions. When asked about their support for redistributive policies the overwhelming majority of responses were in the affirmative, which was not surprising. However, though unprompted, a number of respondents added a caveat to their answer that expressed wariness toward the level of so-called “deservingness” of welfare recipients. Many expressed concern that welfare support (i.e., unemployment benefits) was either too easily accessible or the methods for

means-testing were not stringent enough. Interviews with Danish citizens reveal a general opinion in favor of limited welfare assistance, or welfare that people cannot take advantage of, which contrasts with the historic trend in such opinion in Scandinavian countries.

When asked about their opinions related to immigration, the overall sentiment was positive, but not without reservations. While the majority held the undisputed affirmation that immigration as a whole yielded positive effects, many lamented the fact that immigrants do not integrate themselves with the rest of Danish Society. One memorable interviewee strongly affirmed his support for immigration, even going so far as to discredit right-wing politicians who suggested increasing immigration was dangerous; however, even he had this to say:

“But of course I get annoyed by those who move into this country and still think they are mountain herders down in Pakistan—live in a parallel society with their own laws and their own jurisdiction—that annoys me.”

Other respondents pointed to the fact that they choose to all live together in certain neighborhoods within Copenhagen rather than intermix with the native population. Yet, contrary to what one might expect, respondents rarely blamed the immigrants themselves for their lack of effort. Instead, blame was often assigned to the government for failing to properly absorb the immigrants. Such opinions within the Danish citizenry point towards a prominent desire for homogeneity within society where everyone acts and is “Danish”, rather than support for ethnic diversity. A conclusion could be drawn that highlights the idea that multiculturalism is not as important to the Danish populace, as much as a need for uniformity and homogeneity—at least at the surface level.

After respondents were asked their opinions on the level of overall immigration, a follow-up question was asked to gauge their opinions on “EU immigrants” or “Western immigrants”. The purpose of the question was to discern whether or not those interviewed felt differently towards those that had more similar backgrounds, ideals, or physical characteristics. The expectation was that if the respondents’ attitudes were shaped by in-group, out-group dynamics influenced by ethnic differences, there would be a high level of apathy measured in the interviewees’ responses. The answers did not deviate from expectations with the majority expressing indifference toward the idea and some suggested that Western immigrants had an easier time assimilating and thus go more unnoticed. Another possible explanation for the lack of interest or awareness for Western immigrants could be tied to their lack of visibility in Danish society. The higher visibility of supposed non-EU or non-Western immigrants could be due to a number of factors. However, since visibility is most likely due a difference in physical attributes such as difference in skin tone or other prominent “non-Danish” features, it is understandable to interpret such responses as motivated by ethnic differences.

Racial attitudes are intensely difficult to examine and successfully gauge. In surveys, while some people may be truly unprejudiced, individuals often check themselves to comply with the norms of social desirability (Kuklinski et al. 1997). Though the interviews provided the opportunity for face-to-face interaction, which allowed for the observation of instantaneous responses rather than thought out answers, the results still may not convey a complete picture of the micro-level feelings towards those with diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Additionally, the sampling of respondents was largely derived from convenience sampling and thus yielded a disproportionately large amount of students in their mid-

twenties to mid-thirties. However, this also leads to an interesting phenomenon since students traditionally lean more left than the total population and they too often stated that benefits were too easily acceptable and that beneficiaries could too easily take advantage of the system. The more “neoliberal-themed” responses offered by a demographic group famous for its progressive stance, further strengthen the idea that public attitudes have shifted in recent years.

### **Conclusion and Further Discussion**

While not definitive, the findings suggest a small level of statistical significance regarding the relationship between the percentage of foreign-born within a population and public support for redistributive policies. In combination with the interview data, the lack of a strong causal relationship, weakly supports the demographic determinism of immigration statistics. Instead, findings suggest a reason to believe that immigration plays a more nuanced role of assimilation and the extent to which immigrants are adopting the culture, language and norms of the dominant national tradition, or whether they are seeking to retain their ‘otherness’. What is revealed is that it is not the absolute volume of immigration that matters, but rather something else that is at play. The interviews serve to illustrate this complicated relationship more vividly as many respondents reveal their preferences for immigrants that seek to assimilate into the society. Such findings imply an inherent rebellion against the concept of multiculturalism, which is unsurprising considering the conflicts that tend to arise between different ethnic groups.

Current debates over multiculturalism involve two different concepts of citizenship, *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*. Respectively, these are the concepts of civic nationalism versus cultural nationalism. Civic nationalism rests on a sense of national

unity and purpose based on a set of commonly held political beliefs (i.e., the United States). This sense of community focuses upon residence, where citizenship is gained by being born on the soil or within the territory—a common territorial homeland—and involvement in the state and civil society of that homeland (Brown 1999). Cultural nationalism is the acceptance of a common cultural characteristic and mandates that only those who share that characteristic can be included in the nation (i.e., Japan). *Jus sanguinis* is the basic idea that membership within a nation means that one must be of the blood of the nation.

From the interview responses it is not immediately obvious to which school of thought most of the Danish population subscribes. When asked the question “What does it mean to be Danish”, which reasonably could provoke a large variety of responses, there was never a suggestion of exclusivity. For many of the interviewees, there was however, a focus on safety where a visible theme emerged from the responses, that the Danish people like to feel safe. With multiple citizens memorably comparing Danish culture to that of the hobbits from *The Lord of the Rings*:

“Danish people are a little bit like hobbits—we like our own little bubble and we hate it when stuff outside disturbs us, and as long as people outside don’t disturb our bubble, we don’t look outside. We like to live in it...I think it’s a safety thing. Danish culture is about being safe, we like being safe...”

While the metaphor may be attributed to current events in popular culture (*The Hobbit* was released during the same time, December 2013), the idea of safety was a popular response. The focus on safety could be translated to an aversion of insecurity—a notoriously common reaction to ethnic heterogeneity. Tension between ethnic groups has already erupted leading to fear in other Northern European countries, such as the immigrant-led riots in Sweden (Higgins 2013). Such situations generate fear and

mistrust between ethnic groups, which can undermine the public goods provision that is integral to Northern European welfare states (Habyarimana 2007). It is quite possible that higher levels of insecurity within such “hobbit-like” societies would produce a very “hobbit-like” rejection of such changes.

Moreover, the inflammatory remarks of the newly-popular, right-wing political groups would suggest a strong association with assimilationist views and the *jus sanguis* conceptualization of citizenship. Most vividly, in an ad placed by the Danish People’s Party, the anti-immigrant party warns “Mass rape, violence, insecurity, forced marriages, repression of women, gang-related crime. This is what a multi-ethnic society offers us.” While there was intense backlash directed towards the party afterwards, and the party eventually retracted the ad, the sentiment still remains. The party’s main website demonstrates this attitude quite frankly, “Denmark is not an immigrant-country and never has been. Thus we will not accept transformation to a multiethnic society” (Dansk FolkeParti). Furthermore, because the interview responses suggest that Danish people are categorizing immigrants as an ‘other’, due to their apparent lack of assimilation, it is possible that the Danish people as a whole, also subscribe more mildly to the ideas of cultural nationalism. This is an especially significant suggestion since the majority of interviewees were likely members of a more socially progressive population, thus their adherence to this concept would have stronger implications for the rest of society. Ultimately, the immigrants’ ‘otherness’ would lead people in Denmark to reject the idea of them as part of the citizenship among whom risk and income—and thus welfare as a whole—should be shared.

All of these results hint at the idea that conversations surrounding welfare state could instead truly be conversations surrounding the notion of ‘citizenship’, of which



welfare has become a proxy war. Such ideas are supported by the research, which allows for the conclusion of a much more interesting finding, namely that membership in a political community is not based on any primordial concept of race or ethnicity; rather, it is subject to integrative behavior associated with assuming the dominant culture, language, and other defining characteristics. This finding challenges the original idea that racialized theories of welfare stigma can be imported from the United States to the current situation in Europe. Additionally, it suggests the literature on ethnic heterogeneity and public goods provision coming out of the developing world is also inappropriate for understanding the Northern European concept of citizen and political community.

On the other hand, the findings suggest a very productive agenda for future research, which would look more closely at how people understand what it means to be Danish, Swedish, etc., and the conditions under which someone can acquire that identity. Few scholars have joined an examination of identity politics with welfare state research, but the subject of immigration in Europe has brought identity and issues of assimilation to the forefront (for example: in France it is currently illegal to wear full headscarves in public, and in both France and Denmark, the practice of Halal-style food preparation is being challenged (Titely 2014))

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